

# Southwest Minnesota State University

## Information Technology Services July 2017 – June 2020 Strategic Plan

### Introduction

There is little dispute that information technology has become an integral aspect of higher education. In many ways it is transforming the core activities of colleges and universities. SMSU is no different than any other academic institution in this regard. As a result, it is imperative that sound strategic planning for how information technology resources will be developed and deployed is essential for the long-term success of the University. This need is exceedingly important in an era of limited financial resources that are available for public higher education institutions. Information technology resources are critical for such areas as innovation in instruction, business process enhancement, data-driven decision making and enhanced communications services among others.

To support the information technology services strategic plan development, SMSU's Information Technology Services (SMSU ITS) department has engaged in an ongoing process focused on obtaining input from across the University community. The local feedback has been supplemented by extensive efforts among SMSU ITS staff to assess the general state of information technology trends and directions—specifically those trends and directions within higher education.

### Planning Process

The approach to developing this strategic plan has been multi-faceted. Several inputs have been incorporated into the development of the Strategic Directions outlined as well as the individual goals and objectives that are detailed. Among the inputs to highlight include the following:

1. Large group listening sessions (e.g., faculty assembly, student government).
2. Small group listening sessions (e.g., campus technology committees, individual academic and administrative departments).
3. Activities and recommendations of an Academic Technologies Infrastructure Workgroup that issued its summary report in March 2017.
4. Participation in the Educause Center for Analysis and Research (ECAR) surveys conducted of students and faculty in 2016 and 2017 respectively.
5. Internal surveys conducted of faculty.
6. Participation by ITS staff in national and statewide events such as conferences, webinars and workshops.
7. The University Strategic Plan process.
8. Review of other University department strategic plans (e.g., Library).
9. Minnesota State system wide initiatives particularly initiatives led by the Information Technology Services and Academic and Student Affairs divisions.
10. Review of internal data collected from systems such as services management software.

As a next step, SMSU ITS will be engaged in the development and implementation of a tactical efforts to accomplish the varied goals and objectives outlined for the three year period that began on July 1, 2017—some of which are already in progress. It is anticipated that the tactical approach will need to be

dynamic in light of factors that will be outside of SMSU ITS's direct control including budgetary and staffing resources available and/or new University or Minnesota State initiatives that may require a shift in priorities.

SMSU ITS will incorporate an ongoing assessment and evaluation of its performance in meeting the goals and objectives identified into currently existing processes. These processes include reports provided to the University Technology Strategies Committee, the President's Cabinet and performance reviews. Progress will also be updated on the ITS web site periodically.

### **Planning Factors & Assumptions**

It is important to note that the strategic plan outlined in this document incorporates the fact that SMSU's information technology environment is not, nor will be, a stand-alone environment. As a member of the Minnesota State System, SMSU is reliant upon core administrative software applications managed by the System Office's Information Technology Services division or in some cases, a hybrid team of System Office and Institutional employees. These applications include identity management services (StarID), the Integrated Student Records Systems (ISRS), Degree Audit Reporting (DARS), Event Management Systems, Blackboard Connect, StarRez, rSchool Today, and EPM/Hyperion Brio. In addition, the System Office manages a system wide implementation of learning management software-- Desire2Learn Brightspace (D2L Brightspace). The System Office also manages some specific enterprise wide academic services such as Adobe Connect and Kaltura. In addition, SMSU has recently migrated to an evolving system wide implementation of Microsoft's Office365 service. The System Office also provides leadership, management and support in the area of wide area networks and information security.

In addition to the System Office, SMSU is a member of the Southwest/West Central Higher Education Organization for Telecommunications & Technology (SHOT)—one of six regional consortia that comprise the Learning Network of Minnesota. SHOT supports several communications systems and services (e.g., video conferencing, streaming media, online media management and telephony) that are critical to University operations. Another key external partner for SMSU is Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSUM). MSUM manages a system wide deployment of Image Now—a document management system. The Image Now deployment is an example of an emerging trend among Minnesota State institutions to develop shared services to support critical information technology operations across the system. SMSU also has key relationships with vendors to support applications utilized on campus. These include “on-premise” systems such as the Blackboard Campus Card service and “cloud-based” constituent relationship management (CRM) systems like Hobson's Connect and Retain.

Other factors and assumptions incorporated into this strategic plan are as follows:

1. The level of staffing available for SMSU ITS will not change significantly in the near future.
2. Budgetary resources available to SMSU ITS will not change significantly in the near future.
3. Demands for new information technology resources and tools, in addition to support for existing services, will continue to grow from within the University community.
4. Factors such as the increased consumerization of technology and the growth of mobile devices will continue to grow at an exponential pace.

## **SMSU Information Technology Services Vision**

We will be both a proactive and responsive service organization that fully supports the University community in the innovative utilization of information technology resources to make SMSU a university of choice.

## **SMSU Information Technology Services Mission**

It is our mission to provide a wide spectrum of quality information technology services and support that meet the requirements of the entire University community.

## **Governance and SMSU ITS Organizational Overview**

SMSU ITS is part of the Academic and Student Affairs division at SMSU. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) reports to the Provost. The CIO is also on the President's Cabinet.

SMSU has several standing technology services related committees that serve to provide input into SMSU ITS services. These committees include the: 1) University Technology Strategies Committee; 2) Student Technology Fee Committee; and the 3) SMSUFA Academic Technology Committee. Also, on an as needed basis, ad hoc committees, workgroups or task forces are created to develop recommendations for addressing specific issues. A recent example of such an ad hoc group was the Academic Technologies Infrastructure Workgroup (ATIG) that met routinely in 2016 and 2017 before issuing its summary report. The ATIG developed recommendations for the University to pursue in the area of academic technology infrastructure.

As a unit, SMSU ITS is unique in its organizational structure compared to other universities and colleges within Minnesota State and elsewhere in the nation. The CIO position also serves as the Executive Director for two regional organizations in southwestern/west central Minnesota. These organizations are SHOT and Minnesota Tele-Media (MTM). SHOT is one of six regional consortia that make up the Learning Network of Minnesota. As an organization, SHOT focuses on providing network communications services to its member institutions. SHOT staff are housed at SMSU and SHOT core infrastructure is located in the SMSU Data Center. MTM is a cooperative organization that involves SMSU, two other regional higher education institutions and the SW/WC Service Cooperative—a regional K-12 service organization. MTM provides research, planning, funding assistance, implementation and organization of telecommunications services for its members.

SMSU ITS is a relatively flat organization. Currently, SMSU ITS includes two service teams—Client Services and Infrastructure. Client Services staff report to a Director while Infrastructure staff report directly to the CIO. Including the CIO, there are 11 positions comprising 10.10 FTE. There are also two Graduate Assistant positions funded. One of these positions primarily supports Technology Resource Center operations. The other position primarily focused on providing instructional technology support. There is also a cadre of 15-20 student workers each year that work in the Technology Resource Center (TRC). Among the primary function of the TRC is to serve as the University's IT help desk.

Two other divisions at the University—Institutional Research/Data Management and Web Services—that work closely with ITS on a daily basis involve another four full-time positions and some student worker support. These two divisions report to the Provost/Vice-President for Academic and Student Affairs and the Vice President for Advancement respectively.

ITS also has a close working relationship with the Library. Indeed, in the Fall of 2016, ITS and the Library partnered to relocate the TRC and some ITS staff into the Library's space. The Library has recently added an Instructional Design Librarian position. ITS will be closely engaged with the Instructional Design Librarian with faculty development and support initiatives.

Including the CIO, SHOT has 4 employees comprising 3.0 FTE.

The SMSU ITS organization chart is attached as [Exhibit 1](#).

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- 1. A highly technologically literate and informed campus community that is supported by a customer-service oriented, effective and agile information technology services organization.**  
Services and activities will be performed which meet the needs of faculty, staff and students seeking to thrive in today's rapidly evolving technology-enabled learning environments and workplaces.
- 2. A reliable, accessible, secure and advanced technology infrastructure.**  
On an ongoing basis, ensure that the information technology based tools deployed for the SMSU community's use meet these criteria to the fullest extent possible.
- 3. An innovative and engaging academic technology environment that strives to support student success across the University.**  
Recent data and findings demonstrate that the University needs to give an emphasis to enhancing the physical infrastructure and support services and systems that enhance student success initiatives.
- 4. Support for tools and processes that enable increased efficiency and innovation across all areas of the University while also addressing critical information security needs.**  
As higher education faces the dual challenges of increasing competition and increased demands for accountability and efficiency, the SMSU community will need access to tools, resources and expertise that support individual and collective efforts that make the University more effective in meeting strategic priorities. However, attention to information security will continue to be of paramount importance.

## Goals

**Strategic Direction #1 -- A highly technologically literate and informed campus community that is supported by a customer-service oriented, effective and agile information technology services organization.**

- Goal 1:** Continue to expand the scope of information technology-related awareness and training activities and support for faculty and staff on deployed and planned technologies.
- Goal 2:** Continue efforts to develop and make available a set of detailed resources and documentation for the University community' intake.

- Goal 3:** Enhance current services and resources that support high levels of student information technology literacy.
- Goal 4:** Enhance ITS's customer-service focus and improve agility to meet evolving customer service requirements.

**Strategic Direction #2 -- A reliable, accessible, secure and advanced technology infrastructure.**

On an ongoing basis, ensure that the information technology based tools deployed for the SMSU community's use meet these criteria to the fullest extent possible.

- Goal 1:** Enhance the internal process for reviewing and updating services and tools used in support of the University community.
- Goal 2:** Pursue enhancements to the University's technology infrastructure that support the trend towards mobilization and consumerization of technologies.
- Goal 3:** Continue efforts to keep current and enhance the University's data center infrastructure.
- Goal 4:** Continue efforts to ensure that the University's network systems keep up with growing capacity demands from the University community.
- Goal 5:** Continue to build out internal processes & procedures that support this strategic direction.
- Goal 6:** Be vigilant about ensuring that the University's technology infrastructure meets security requirements.

**Strategic Direction #3 -- An innovative and engaging academic technology environment that strives to support student success across the University.**

Recent data and findings demonstrate that the University needs to give an emphasis to enhancing the physical technology infrastructure and support services and systems that enhance student success initiatives.

- Goal 1:** Enhance teaching & learning facilities.
- Goal 2:** Enhance teaching & learning support resources.
- Goal 3:** Undertake efforts to ensure that accessibility needs are addressed.
- Goal 4:** Enhance technology-based student support services.

**Strategic Direction #4 -- Support for tools and processes that enable increased efficiency and innovation across all areas of the University while also addressing critical information security needs.**

As higher education faces the dual challenges of increasing competition and increased demands for accountability and efficiency, the SMSU community will need access to tools, resources and expertise that support individual and collective efforts that make the University more effective in meeting strategic priorities. However, attention to information security will continue to be of paramount importance.

- Goal 1:** Develop applications and services that enhance business processes and operations.
- Goal 2:** Implement processes and services that provide cost efficiencies for the University.
- Goal 3:** Provide support for an enhanced data driven decision-making culture across the University.
- Goal 4:** Provide support at the University level for the Next Generation ISRS project as it evolves in the next 3-7 years.